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GENEVA FOR RMA  
BRUSSELS FOR MMEZNAR  
DEPT PASS TO AF/W/EPLUMB AND PRM/AFR/MNICHOLSON  
DEPT PASS TO USAID/OFDA/DDEBERNARDO  
DAKAR PASS TO USAID/OFDA/RDAVIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2017

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SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE GOV'T, UNHCR LAUNCH SURPRISE REQUEST  
FOR MORE FUNDING TO KEEP NICLA REFUGEE CAMP OPEN

Classified By: EconChief EMassinga, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (SBU) On May 4, Foreign Minister Bakayoko, along with UNHCR country representative Saber Azam, convened a hastily planned meeting of principal UNHCR donor countries (including the European Union's country representative) to request additional funding to keep the Guiglo region's Nicla refugee camp open for an unspecified time frame. No budget was provided. ONUCI Deputy SRSR Georg Carpentier sat with Bakayoko and Azam, but did not take a lead in the presentation. Bakayoko and Azam noted that this was a joint request from the Ivorian government and UNHCR.

12. (C) Once the press had been ushered from the conference room, donor countries asked pointed questions concerning the need for maintaining the camp in operation. (Note: Nicla camp in the Guiglo region is scheduled to close June 30th. Indeed, Azam had in the previous few days participated in public ceremonies marking the formal turnover of the camp to the Ivorian government in preparation for the imminent full closure. End Note.) Bakayoko answered a question posted by the Spanish Ambassador by saying the Ouagadougou Peace Accords have created a new need for Nicla, originally established to protect Liberian refugees fleeing that country's now-ended conflict, to remain open. The Foreign Minister argued (somewhat illogically) that the long-standing ethnic tensions in the Western region of Cote d'Ivoire could flare in the context of the upcoming voter identification and registration efforts to take place all over the country, and that closure of Guiglo could very well inflame those hostilities, potentially upsetting the peace and national reunification/reconciliation process. (Note: The political class has been somewhat unnerved by lurid reports of a up-tick in violence in the perpetually-unsettled Western regions)

13. (C) Bakayoko said that some 10,000 Liberians remain at the Nicla camp as well as some 15,000 IDPs in the nearby CATD (Center for Displaced Persons) camp, and that despite a recent surge in repatriations, some 5,000 Liberians will probably refuse to return to their country of origin, and will need assistance to resettle and integrate into the local community. The IDPs will also need such assistance. The appeal from UNHCR and the Ivorian government was for funding to focus on these reintegration efforts, which, according to Azam, cannot properly begin until the last of the repatriations is complete, when the camp staff can devote its full attention to this new objective.

¶4. (C) Donors were skeptical at the apparent illogic of the appeal. The German ambassador wanted to clarify that "the original objective has been achieved." Even international and UN organizations present at the meeting were disappointed that the plan wasn't well vetted through their channels beforehand. Other country representatives said they doubted their governments had the resources for the proposed activity. UNICEF country representative Yousouf Oomar told Emboff privately that he found the appeal and its lack of specifics amateurish (although he didn't directly address the question of whether the camp should remain open).

¶5. (C) Comment. Since the May 4th meeting, Post has heard nothing further from either the Ministry, UNHCR or the donor countries concerning. Since the same countries have been reluctant to respond to even modest appeals for new funding streams to support identification, elections, DDR and probably relief on World Bank and AfDB arrears (septel), we doubt that this initiative will go anywhere anytime soon.  
End comment.  
Valle